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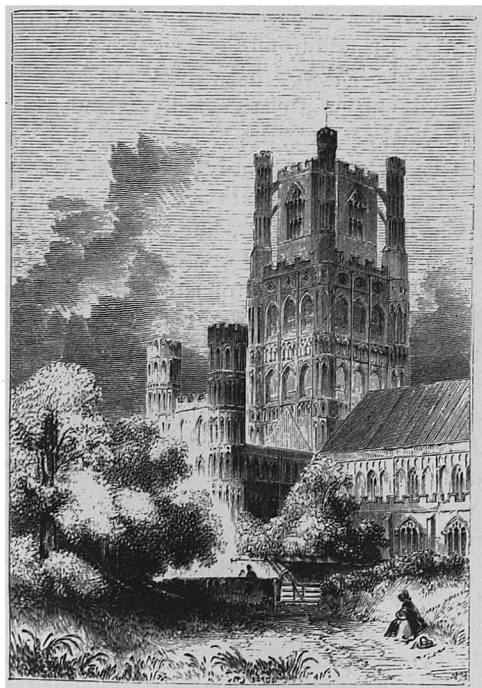
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ELY CATHEDRAL.

THOUGH located within a town of no remarkable size, and literally, like that town, on an island, the Cathedral of Ely is in many regards one of the most notable in the British Islands, as it is also among the largest. Before taking particular note of it, however, it may be well to advise the untraveled reader, and to remind the traveled, that the little old town of Ely stands on an island (called the "Isle of Ely," and said to be derived from old Saxon words signifying "island of eels") formed by the curvings and branchings of the river Ouse, at about sixteen miles north northeast of Cambridge, thirty from Peterborough (site of a cathedral of note, already examined in this series), and seventy-two from London, on the Great Eastern Railway. The town has a great antiquity, dating back to the time of the Danes, as even then of some importance, having already a monastery founded by St. Etheldreda in 673 and destroyed by the northern conquerors in 870. Its ecclesiastical eminence, however, was not allowed to fall away through this violence, the monastery being refounded for a body of Benedictine monks in 970, and from that time to this the prominence of the see being more or less markedly maintained, and Henry VIII. turning it from a mere religious house into a cathedral. It is notable that the incumbents of the see—then virtually lords of the Isle of Ely, held prominent position in both the Church and the State, throughout much of the troubled time of the Wars of the Roses; and the student of Shakspearean history will not fail to remember that one of the Bishops of Ely figures in Richard III. Then, as long after, that prelacy had a metropolitan palace in London, the site being still shown on the left of Holborn, going down toward the Holborn Viaduct and very near to what was lately Holborn Bars; and it was of the prelate's grounds there



NORMAN CENTRAL TOWER.

located, that Richard III. spoke, in one of the scenes of the tragedy of that name:

"My Lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,
I saw fine strawberries in your garden there."

Naturally, the see having a considerable number of intriguants, had also some victims as well as men of power and success; and it may be said that Ely is as closely connected with old English history as any other place of its importance within the islands.

The present cathedral has the reputation of having been founded by the first Norman abbot of the Benedictines, about 1082 to 1090; and it seems to have been doubly dedicated, after the diffusive manner of the times, to St. Peter and St. Etheldreda (odd conjunction for the saint who is accredited with the foundation of clerical celibacy, to hold this partnership with a woman!) in 1107. According to authorities which seem reliable, the Galilee Porch, one of the



ELY CATHEDRAL.

features of the structure, was built at about 1200 to half a dozen years later; and the Norman choir is reputed to have been built, or rather rebuilt from an inferior structure, about 1230 to 1250, probably all that period consumed in its slow and careful erection. The great gale of 1322, of which the ruinous effects were so marked as to have attracted the notice of many chroniclers, and which for the time was believed to herald the end of the world, blew down the central tower of the first erection; and the octagon tower, which took its place, was begun in that year or the one following, and finished about five years after, with the lantern added still some five or six years later—probably about 1342. The western part of the choir of 1230, partially destroyed by the fall of the tower, was restored some time earlier, though the records are not explicit as to the time of its completion. The Lady Chapel (a feature of this religious house as of many others of the ultra-monastic times), dates from the year preceding the fall of the tower, though not reaching its present shape until 1350. During the present century very many needful restorations have been made, at great cost and with corresponding care and judgment, to what the English people justly regard as one of their very finest ecclesiastical monuments; and this labor has completed what might else have been imperfect—the blending and continuing of orders. In the cathedral, as it stands at present, are to be seen by the eye instructed in architecture, an odd but imposing blending of the Saxon, the Norman, and the Gothic, in nearly all their varieties ("Early English," "Perpendicular," "Decorated," etc.), pleasing the eye at every turn, within and without, and proving that taste can harmonize the incongruous, though always assuming a risk of no mean importance in the attempt. All authorities, as well as all visitors, agree that Ely Cathedral is quite as worthy of study, in both regards, as any other religious house in Great Britain; and indeed it may be said that without passing a considerable number of hours there, nothing can be satisfactorily known of the splendid pile, congruous in in-

congruity. Without, the best views of the erection are those to be taken from the railway-bridge and the park, in the near vicinity, and from Stuckney Hill, on the Newmarket road, some two miles distant. Within, the elaborate work in all the orders named must command long and loving attention; while the view across the octagon, with its immense width and graceful proportions, is considered to have few if any superiors in the whole range of church architecture.

In detail, the elaborate carving of the very rich stalls, and the paintings illustrating Bible history on the roof of the nave, may be mentioned as especially commanding attention.

Authorities differ widely as to some of the dimensions of this cathedral; and even the use of a tape-measure by the ardent and careful inquirer, might be rendered inconclusive by the projections occurring in such numbers. All those authorities agree as to its being one of the largest churches in Europe, though covering less ground than the Duomo at Milan; but the figures differ, from some 570 feet to little more than 500, and the question will probably remain an open one for this generation of the careless. For the width (the tape-measure again being out of the question) we find absolutely no data; and the height of the great central tower must be, so to speak, averaged, between those who claim that it reaches 280 feet in height and those who only accredit it with an altitude of 260 feet.

Whatever its exact length, height or breadth, however, Ely Cathedral (as our triple illustration well con-

veys), is indeed a structure of remarkable beauty combined with undeniable grandeur, well worthy of study from any point of view, and exciting quite the regulation wonder over the physical devotion, the outlay, and the patient drudgery that could have produced it. It may be well to note, in conclusion, that a short excursion from Ely, when the gazer is tired of the cathedral, will lead to a very different place, Lynn Regis,



INTERIOR VIEW.

with the most remarkable little harbor in the world, and the celebrity of having been the place where Eugene Aram, the melancholy hero of Bulwer's novel and Hood's poem, was usher in a grammar-school, and apprehended there for the murder which seemed to be his fate, in 1759. It is perhaps a singular source from which to derive celebrity; but the people of Lynn Regis have no scruple in the claim which attaches them to the fame of Bulwer and Hood.